

AT A MEETING
- of the -
**CHILDRENS AND YOUNG
PEOPLES SCRUTINY AND
PERFORMANCE PANEL** held at
the Council House, Walsall on
21 December 2006 at 6.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor Arif
Councillor Bird
Councillor Cassidy
Councillor Creaney
Councillor Robinson
Mr. M. Quinn Archdiocese of Birmingham
D.J.Jones Primary School

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Sue Dalley Acting Head Quality and Performance
Helen Denton Managing Director of Education Walsall
Melanie Harmitt Head of Finance Children's Services
Louise Hughes Assistant Director Children's Services -
Education
Pauline Pilkington Assistant Director Children's Services –
Social Care

SCRUTINY SUPPORT

Nikki Ehlen (Scrutiny Officer)

30/06. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors Chambers, and Martin.

31/06. SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for this meeting.

32/06. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

The members of the political groups represented on the panel indicated there were no whipping arrangements for any of the political parties in respect of items on the agenda. There were no declarations of interest.

33/06 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

That the minutes of previous meetings, held on 15 November 2006, copies having been previously circulated to each member of the panel, be approved and signed by the chair as a correct record of the meeting.

34/06 AGREEMENT OF TABLED ITEM

Councillor Arif asked for the panel's agreement to table the late item 'consultation on school organisation matters'.

Councillor Bird stated that he considered it more appropriate to bring this item to the next available meeting. He stated that this would ensure that the panel were being open and accountable and requested that Councillor Jon Phillips be invited to the meeting where this item was considered.

Resolved

The panel agreed to bring this as an additional item to the budget meeting on 26 January 2007, and to invite Councillor Jon Philips to this meeting.

35/06 FEEDBACK FROM WORKING GROUPS

Councillor Arif informed the panel that the Safeguarding Children Working Group would be considering the work plan of the local safeguarding children board, information on social factors contributing to children taken into care and that members would be advising officers on community engagement.

The minutes of the Social Inclusion Working Group were noted.

36/06 CHILDREN'S SERVICES SOCIAL CARE PERFORMANCE SCORECARD SECOND QUARTER OUTCOMES JULY-SEPTEMBER 2006

Sue Dalley spoke to the report (tabled).

Councillor Robinson clarified the meaning of Performance indicator 'PAF A3 Re-registrations of children on CPR'

Sue Dalley explained that this was the number of children who had come off the child protection register and had subsequently re-registered. Pauline Pilkington stated that CSCI gave guidance on this figure. Pauline added that this accounted for a small number of children.

Pauline Pilkington clarified that placement choices were limited, and it was not always possible to meet all the needs of the children but that actions were taken in the child's best interests.

Councillor Creaney asked if there were provisions for casework to be completed when social workers were off sick.

Pauline Pilkington stated that this was difficult as the number of agency staff that could be used was limited, but that there had to be movement within the system to prioritise work.

Sue Dalley drew members' attention to the scorecard and clarified that the figure of 76.8 represented 76.8 children looked after in the borough per 10,000 children. Sue Dalley stated that this figure was not as good as comparator figures of 60 and 64. Sue stated that the team needed an action plan to improve this situation.

Councillor Robinson asked officers whether there were certain areas of the borough that had higher numbers of looked after children than others.

Sue Dalley stated that there were pockets of children who shared similar experiences, which made children more vulnerable. Pauline Pilkington stated that this was associated with deprivation factors and as part of the every child matters agenda, better services needed to be provided to prevent children needing to be taken into care.

The panel discussed how the work that was being completed to engage with LNP's.

Louise Hughes stated that as part of the part of the engagement strategy, locality participation events were to be held in each of the local areas and data would be focused on a locality.

Councillor Robinson stated that he considered it important to use information to make the work that LNP's do more significant.

Councillor Arif stated that data needed an individual present to provide an explanation of the information provided.

Pauline Pilkington stated that dates had already been identified for these locality events.

Helen Denton emphasised that some of these figures represented small numbers of children, and advised caution when considering the figures.

Pauline Pilkington stated that they could present profiles at LNPs with anonymous case studies.

Councillor Bird questioned the end result of the locality partnership events.

Pauline Pilkington stated that it was important that the Council engaged properly, and when the contract with Serco ended consultation needed to take place to inform how the new contract was taken forward.

RESOLVED

- The Looked after Children action plan is brought to the panel
- The scorecard is provided to the panel on a quarterly basis.

37/06 COSTING OF JOINT AREA REVIEW

Pauline Pilkington explained that this was an extensive inspection, and following a request from the panel, other local authorities had been asked to estimate the cost to them of preparing for and managing the inspection. There had been wide variation in response from other local authorities.

Pauline Pilkington stated that the Council had been given the date of 28 January 2008 as the inspection date, and a project managed by Bill Henwood had commenced.

Members discussed the potential impact of the cost of the JAR on other services within children's services.

Councillor Bird stated that the Council should ensure that a minimum of £160,000 was built into the budget.

RESOLVED

That the report is sent to Councillor O'Hare and Councillor Zahid along with the following recommendation is sent to Cabinet

The date of the Joint Area Review was not available to the Council when the comments and recommendations regarding the budget were put to Cabinet by the children's and young people scrutiny and performance panel. As a result of this, the scrutiny panel request that a reduction in savings required or a growth item of £200,000 is made available to children's services to support the facilitation of the Joint Area Review.

38/06 CRB CHECKS

Members discussed the background to the CRB checks. Councillor Bird suggested that elected members who were not up for election in May 2007 should be CRB checked in the first instance.

RESOLVED

Pauline Pilkington to suggest to Paul Smith that elected members who are not up for election in May 2007 will be CRB checked in the first instance.

39/06 FORWARD PLAN

Councillor Bird asked for an update on the request at SMB for all key decisions to go to scrutiny.

RESOLVED

Nikki Ehlen would provide this information to members of the panel.

Chair.....

Date.....